

Message Text

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SUBJECT: CONSULAR STAFFING SHORTAGES - MEXICO CITY

REF: MEXICO 6162

1. ALTHOUGH GRATEFUL THAT THE DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN ARRANGING TDY OF ONE OFFICER TO ASSIST US WITH VISA ISSUANCE WORKLOAD, I AM DISMAYED THAT WE MUST SEEMINGLY WAIT UNTIL DECEMBER 1975 AND JANUARY 1976 FOR OFFICERS TO FILL TWO NEW POSITIONS CREATED AT MONTERREY JUST TWO MONTHS AGO. EQUALLY DISAPPOINTING IS THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE REPLACEMENT FOR AN OFFICER TRANSFERRED FROM GUADALAJARA ON THREE WEEKS NOTICE WILL NOT ARRIVE FOR SIX MONTHS.

2. THE PROBLEMS OF COPING HERE AND AT THE CONSTITUENT POSTS WITH AN ANNUAL 15 TO 20 PERCENT INCREASE IN CONSULAR SERVICES WITHOUT BENEFIT OF NEW RESOURCES HAS BEEN DIFFICULT ENOUGH, BUT TO HAVE TO ABSORB VACANCIES OF FIVE AND SIX MONTHS IN FILLING EXISTING POSITIONS IS INDEED DISHEARTENING. KNOWING THE NATURE OF THE WORLD-WIDE PERSONNEL SHORTAGE, WE HAVE ON MOST DAYS BEEN ASSIGNING UP TO TEN ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS TO ASSIST IN ISSUING VISAS. WHEN TO THIS LOSS OF REPORTING EFFORT THERE IS ADDED ABSENCES DUE TO ILLNESS, LEAVE AND VACANCIES BETWEEN TRANSFERS, THE PROSPECT OF ANY PROLONGED DIVERSION OF RESOURCES MUST INEVITABLY HAVE AN ADVERSE IMPACT ON PROGRAMS WHICH CANNOT BE LONG IGNORED WITHOUT CAUSING DAMAGE TO OUR BROADER NATIONAL INTEREST.

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3. WHILE AGAIN STRESSING THAT WE ARE AWARE OF THE

DEPARTMENT'S MANPOWER PROBLEM, AND WHILE RECOGNIZING THAT OUR SIZE ENABLES US TO ABSORB A DEGREE OF OPERATIONAL INCONVENIENCE IMPOSSIBLE TO CONTEMPLATE AT SMALLER POSTS, WE NEVERTHELESS UNDERScore THE FACT THAT OUR CONSULAR WORKLOAD RANKS AMONG THE THREE HIGHEST IN THE WORLD AND THAT TO CARRY IT WE MUST MAINTAIN A MINIMUM STAFFING LEVEL. WE NEED THE FLEXIBILITY AND STABILITY THAT CAN ONLY BE GAINED THROUGH A STRENGTHENED AND ENLARGE STAFF.

4. IN APPEALING FOR ASSISTANCE I WOULD NOTE THAT THE MANY APPLICANTS WHO, AFTER DAY-LONG WAITS (INCLUDING SLEEPING OVERNIGHT ON THE SIDEWALKS) FINALLY RECEIVE VISAS, SPEND ENORMOUS SUMS OF MONEY IN THE UNITED STATES EACH YEAR. IN 1974, THE 1.8 MILLION MEXICAN TOURISTS WHO STAYED THREE OR MORE DAYS SPENT 900 MILLION DOLLARS. THOSE VISITORS CROSSING THE BORDER FOR ONE TO THREE DAY VISITS SPENT 850 MILLION DOLLARS. IN 1975 THE TOTAL IN EACH CATEGORY WILL EXCEED ONE BILLION DOLLARS. THEREFORE, WE MUST NOT OVERLOOK THE FACT THAT BY MAKING IT DIFFICULT FOR PEOPLE TO OBTAIN VISAS WE ARE DISCOURAGING TRAVEL WHICH HAS IMPORTANT ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES FOR OUR COUNTRY'S BALANCE

OF PAYMENTS SITUATION.

5. MOREOVER, IT IS IRONIC THA THE U.S. TRAVEL SERVICE ON THE ONE HAND SPENDS ONE MILLION DOLLARS ANNUALLY (SOME 400,000 DOLLARS IN ADVERTISEMENTS) URGIN MEXICAN NATIONALS TO VISIT THEIR NORTHERN NEIGHBOR, WHILE THE EMBASSY ON THE OTHER HAND, WITH PRESENT STAFF AND EXISTING TECHNIQUES, IS UNABLE PROPERLY TO SERVICE EVEN THOSE VISITORS WHO WISH TO GO TO THE U.S. WITHOUT SUCH BLANDISHMENTS. GIVEN THIS ACTUAL AND PROSPECTIVE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE AND THE CONSEQUENT DEMAND FOR VISAS THUS GENERATED, THE SITUATION CAN ONLY MOVE FROM NEAR CRISIS TO CERTAIN CHAOS UNLESS ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ARE MADE AVAILABLE.

6. NOTE IS AGAIN MADE OF THE FACT THAT TECHNICAL FAILURES AND SLOWDOWNS IN THE DEPARTMENT'S COMPUTER VISA CLEARANCE SERVICE OCCASIONALLY PLAYS HAVOC WITH OUR EFFORTS TO DEAL WITH THE VISA ISSUANCE PROBLEM.

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TOO OFTEN THE COMPUTER HAS FAILED US AT CRITICAL PERIODS. AS SCA ADMINISTRATOR WALENTYNOWICZ SAID WHILE HERE RECENTLY: THERE ARE SOME PERSONNEL PROBLEMS ABOUT WHICH WE CAN DO LITTLE, BUT CERTAINLY WE OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT TECHNICAL PROBLEMS SUCH AS MAKING COMPUTERS WORK PROPERLY. THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THESE COMPUTER PROBLEMS ARE BEING SUMMARIZED IN A SEPARATE CABLE, BUT I TRUST THE MATTER CAN BE LOOKED INTO URGENTLY SO THAT THE COMPUTER CAN BE

COUNTED ON TO AID RATHER THAN HINDER OUR EFFORTS TO DEAL WITH AN
INCREASINGLY BURDENSOME VISA PROBLEM.
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